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Letter dated 14 March 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of March 2008, and on behalf of the members of the League of Arab States, I have the honour to attach herewith the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment at its nineteenth session, held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo on 5 and 6 December 2007 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the text of this letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 52 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem **Mohamad**
Chairman of the Arab Group
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan
to the United Nations

* A/63/50.

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Annex to the letter dated 14 March 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change

The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment at its nineteenth session held at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States on 5 and 6 December 2007 adopted the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change which constitutes a basis for future action and reflects the Arab position on how to address climate change issues. The text is as follows.

Bearing in mind the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and notably section II of Agenda 21, corresponding to chapters 9-22, regarding conservation and management of resources for development; chapter 33 regarding financial resources and mechanisms; chapter 34 on transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity-building with a view to helping developing countries to implement Agenda 21; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the commitments contained therein; and the Marrakesh Accords, concluded at the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2001, which established three funds: the special climate change fund, the adaptation fund and the least developed countries fund,

Stressing the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, in particular principle 7 on the common but differentiated responsibilities of developed and developing countries, in which developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command, as well as principle 16 concerning the responsibility of the polluter to bear the cost of pollution; *stressing* paragraphs 14-23 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, on changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, and paragraphs 36-38 on climate change, which emphasize a commitment to achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention, namely the stabilization of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent interference with the climate system within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities,

Noting that developed countries have accepted historic responsibility for the problem of climate change,

Recalling the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which identified a scientific consensus that climate change is a reality, and stated that temperatures had increased by an average of 0.76° C in the course of the twentieth century, during which period the sea level had risen by 17 centimetres; that a temperature increase of 2° C constitutes the critical stage, and that as a dry and arid region, the Arab region is one of those most exposed to the

potential impact of climate change such as the threat to coastal regions, increasingly acute drought and desertification, scarcity of water resources, the increasing salinity of groundwater, and the unprecedented spread of plagues, epidemics and diseases,

Aware that the potential effects of climate change could have negative repercussions for development in the Arab region, such as a decline in agricultural productivity, deterioration of vegetation cover, loss of biodiversity, a shortfall in the availability of food, and the threat posed to vital economic investments, and aware that climate change could have social consequences as people move and migrate from affected regions to other regions, whether within the same State or to neighbouring or other States, thereby placing further pressure on the environment and resources; and also that it could have consequences for public health owing to increasing air pollution, severe heat waves and the spread of gastric diseases,

Recognizing that addressing the potential effects of climate change requires international action and solidarity in the context of the goals of sustainable development; that the basis of such action should be the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; that such action would benefit all States; that it should focus in particular on assistance to the developing countries that are most exposed to the effects of climate change; that it should consider the interests of developing countries that produce fossil fuels and in particular oil, whose economies will be adversely affected by measures addressing climate change, and the interests of developing countries whose economies will be affected by restrictions and procedures imposed on the exploitation of forests,

Stressing the importance of international action and solidarity in order to ensure that climate change does not result in further setbacks for human development,

Warning of the consequences of the tendency for developed countries to encourage developing countries to cultivate crops that produce biofuel instead of food, and *encouraging* the production of biofuels from organic waste,

Recognizing that, in the first half of the twenty-first century, there is no alternative to adapting to climate change and *noting* that developed and developing countries are not equal in their capacity to adapt,

Commending the Government of the Republic of Tunisia for hosting the International Solidarity Conference on Climate Change Strategies for the African and Mediterranean Regions, held in Tunis from 18 to 20 November 2007 under the high patronage of the President of the Republic, and *calling* on the international community to take into consideration the recommendations of the Conference, particularly as regards strengthening international solidarity to address the issues of climate change,

Recalling the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, 2004,

We, the ministers and heads of delegation participating in the nineteenth session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo on 5 and 6 December 2007, have decided to strive to achieve the following:

– To include policies addressing climate change issues in all sectors within national and regional sustainable development policies, in a manner compatible with sustainable economic growth and efforts to eradicate poverty;

– To adopt national and regional action plans addressing climate change issues in order to assess the potential effects and to put in place mitigation and adaptation programmes. Governments shall play a pivotal implementation role in coordination and cooperation with all concerned parties including scientific research centres, universities, civil society institutions and the private sector;

– Mitigation programmes shall focus on producing and using cleaner fuels; improving the efficiency of energy use in all sectors; diversifying energy sources in accordance with the prevailing economic and social conditions; expanding the use of cleaner production techniques and environmentally friendly technologies; extending economic incentives for the use of the most efficient products; bringing to a swift conclusion the World Trade Organization negotiations on defining lists of environmental goods on which customs restrictions can be lifted or reduced; and making use of carbon trading and markets;

– The process of adaptation to measures addressing climate change shall be fully consistent with economic and social development so as to achieve sustainable economic development and to eradicate poverty and shall be implemented through the creation and dissemination of methods and tools for assessing the effects and extent of climate change; the improvement of planning for the processes and procedures of adaptation, in a manner integrated with sustainable development; action to better understand the creation and dissemination of processes, methods and tools geared to achieving economic diversification, in order to increase the flexibility of economic sectors vulnerable to the effects of climate change;

– Adaptation programmes shall focus in particular on providing the necessary infrastructure to limit the anticipated risks. They shall include mechanisms for protection against those risks; greater efficiency in the management of natural resources, which can be achieved through the use of mechanisms for monitoring, control and early warning and the appropriate technologies; preparations in the event of disasters caused by climate change; capacity-building; the provision, improvement and exchange of information including climate information; the raising of public awareness and the creation of partnerships;

– The Arab States shall be prepared to host the adaptation fund and to provide logistical facilities to make it successful.

We call on the developed countries:

– To show a greater commitment to reducing greenhouse gases from all sectors, in view of their historic, present and direct responsibilities for climate change. The post-2012 period should include specific quantitative targets, and the policies and procedures undertaken to achieve these goals should not adversely affect sustainable development in developing countries;

– To expand their action in favour of developing countries so as to fulfil the agreed international commitments and to meet the challenges posed by climate

change. Such action should support the mechanisms currently in place, and in particular the clean development mechanism and the funding mechanisms and funds provided for by the Kyoto Protocol but not yet in force;

– To provide the necessary support for technology transfer, capacity-building and funding for a more thorough and comprehensive assessment of the potential effects of climate change on the most affected developing countries, including the Arab States, in order to determine priorities and implement programmes geared to mitigating and adapting to climate change, and to addressing the effects of measures taken in response to it.

We call upon the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change:

– To expedite the establishment of the three funds provided for in the Marrakesh Accords; to assert the right of developing countries, including those whose economies depend on the production and sale of fossil fuels, to benefit from the financial mechanisms provided for by the Kyoto Convention and by its Protocol, and to do so in a balanced way; to expedite the establishment of the adaptation fund under a management characterized by independence, in which developing countries are represented in accordance with the geographical distribution in force at the United Nations. The fund should have fixed or predictable resources and it should have its own systems and should operate in accordance with rules and criteria characterized by transparency and fairness, taking into consideration the priorities and interests of the citizens and peoples of developing countries suffering from climate change;

– To focus on the States mentioned in Annex I for commitments to limit emissions in the post-2012 period and to reject any new or voluntary commitments for developing countries, including the Arab States. Those countries are still in the development phase and need cleaner fossil fuels with improved efficiency and enhanced clean technologies to build their progress and development on a sustainable basis. Their first priority remains to eradicate poverty. Moreover, the developed countries did not achieve their own economic progress or their industrial development by relying on solar energy, wind energy or biofuels, but rather by relying on pollutant coal energy;

– To develop and transfer clean technology, including technologies for the production of clean fuels and carbon capture and storage; to work to implement carbon capture and storage in the context of clean development mechanism projects;

– To establish research centres for the study of climate change in developing regions, including the Arab world, which should study the impacts and challenges facing the citizens and peoples of developing countries as a result of climate change.